

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 01411 270016Z

21

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1411

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR IS JO

SUBJECT: WEST BANK MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

1. ISRAEL JOURNALIST WHO COVERS OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (RUBENSTEIN) HAS REMARKED ON THE INTENSITY WITH WHICH WEST BANKERS ARE PREPARING FOR APRIL 12 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. HE SAID VOTER REGISTRATION WAS HIGHER THAN MOST ISRAELI OFFICIALS HAD EXPECTED AND OBSERVED THAT THERE ARE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF ADDITIONAL CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE NEARLY EVERY DAY EVEN THOUGH INDIVIDUALS CANNOT FILE OFFICIALLY UNTIL THE END OF MARCH. (MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT 87,750 POTENTIAL VOTERS HAVE REGISTERED THIS YEAR, COMPARED TO 35,000 IN 1972.) RUBENSTEIN SAID THERE WAS AS YET NO CLEAR PICTURE OF WHETHER HIGH INTEREST AND LARGE NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS WERE DUE MORE TO LIBERALIZATION OF VOTER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS OR TO FACT THAT PLO IS THIS TIME NOT DISCOURAGING PARTICIPATION.

2. RUBENSTEIN ALSO OBSERVED THAT, WHILE GENERAL ASSUMPTION THAT INCREASE IN ELECTORATE WILL WORK AGAINST INTERESTS OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS IS PROBABLY VALID, EFFECT MIGHT NOT BE AS GREAT AS HAS BEEN ASSUMED. HE MADE THE POINT THAT MANY SUPPORTERS OF CURRENT INCUMBENTS WHO MAY NOT HAVE FELT IT NECESSARY TO

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 01411 270016Z

VOTE IN 1972 (OR, AS IN HEBRON, HAD NO OPPORTUNITY) ARE THEREFORE

REGISTERING NOW FOR FIRST TIME.

3. REBENSTEIN ADMITTED THAT HE IS STILL UNCERTAIN
OF THE ISRAELI ATIONALE FOR OPENING UP THE ELECTORAL
ROLLS AND RISKING THE DEFEATOF LEADERS WITH WHOM
THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS LEARNED TO WORK. HE
CONFIDED THAT HE HAD REQUESTED AN EXPLANATION FROM
DEFMIN PERES IN A RCENT OFF-THE-RECORD INTERVIEW.
PERES REPLIED THAT ENCOURAGING NEW WEST BANK LEAD-
ERSHIP WAS ONE WAY TO ENTICE KING HUSSEIN BACK INTO
THENEGOTIATING
PICTURE. RUBENSTEIN SAID HE FINDS IT
DIFFICULT TO TAKE SUCH A SIMPLISTIC - AND IN HIS VIEW
UNREALISTIC - RESPONSE AT FACE VALUE.
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Message Attributes

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